

*It Happens
to Strong
People, Too*

POEMS

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Aspen and Sonder • Austin, Texas

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PART ONE

It All Starts Somewhere, Right?

Born on a Thursday

What happened? she asked.

I'm really good at self-sabotage, I told her.

Start from the beginning, she said.

I was born on a Thursday, I began.

On the Roof

When I was a kid
I'd climb the black wrought iron gate
That intersected the back of my house
Careful to step over the sharp points
And clamber up on the roof.

At the highest point, I'd sit
And watch clouds overhead
Watch the the world below me
Cars passing on the street
A boy I liked walking by.

I thought about yelling down
To show him I wasn't afraid
But I watched silently instead
He never saw me.

People are something to fear
I guess that's the takeaway here
I'll climb the tallest building
And try just about anything once
But to call out
And say
Look! Look at me!
That invites a verdict
It's safer to sit alone
And watch it all pass below.

Trains

At night, the train barrels past
And if I'm lucky I'll catch it just as I slip into sleep.
It's one of the few sounds I remember
Of the house I grew up in.

I heard it every day for the first 15 years of my life.
And it offered a steady heartbeat
To an otherwise terrorizing quiet.

Movement and possibility—
I fantasized about jumping on one day—
In the place of a perfect stagnant pond
Where mosquitoes thrived.

Now when I roll into sleep
With that sound in my head
I think fondly of a place
That I couldn't wait to escape.

Scars and Dirt

Can you pick at scars
Until they become
Flesh wounds again?

Or do you pick
Until scar tissue opens up
To something new?

Forced to repeat
Until lessons finally learned
Rolling back and forth
Over the same goddamn red dirt
A reminder that you came from land
That stains your clothes
And if anyone gets too close
It'll stain their clothes too.

Like a Footnote

When she was asked to tell her story
She gave it three lines
Before stepping back
And asking someone else
And you?

An internal sigh
Relief
This is much more interesting.

She told her life like a footnote.

I Miss the Sun

The darkness protected her
From being seen
A shield
So they couldn't make out her stripes.

They'll love me
As long as they don't see me too clearly.

And they did.

She was always a bit blurry around the edges
But at least they loved her.

I miss the sun, she thought,
As the horizon started to turn
As she went inside.